

8-13-1964

Correspondence, John C. Stennis, August 13-17, 1964

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WASHINGTON
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JOHN STENNIS

HATTIESBURG, MISSISSIPPI

August 13, 1964

Senator John Stennis
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator,

I'm sure that you must be aware of the increased activity by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Mississippi. It is my opinion that this activity has reached the proportion of violating the individual rights of the citizen in Mississippi.

President Johnson stated yesterday that there is no room for a Federal Police Force in our country and that the duty of Law Enforcement is the responsibility of local officials, but where do we draw the line between a Federal Investigation Agency and a Federal Police Force. The local situation is completely under control, Law and Order is being maintained by local officials, and there have been no riots and mob violence. In view of this situation, how can the FBI justifiably place abnormally large numbers of agents in Hattiesburg and South Mississippi to conduct a Mass Program of Interrogation. Large numbers of our citizens, completely innocent of any unlawful conduct, have been visited by FBI Agents in their homes and businesses, and interrogated and intimidated for hours.

I know of no case in which these FBI Agents have had Legal Warrants. I am most concerned about these actions, and the climate of fear that has been created in our area, by these actions. I want to ask you to investigate this situation and offer any suggestions and comments that you may have.

Sincerely,

RICHARD B. RUSSELL, GA., CHAIRMAN
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Invasion

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

August 17, 1964

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Dear [REDACTED]

This will acknowledge your letter of August 13 with regard to the activities of the FBI in Mississippi.

I certainly understand your concern and it is one which I share. I think our citizens and property owners have constitutional rights which must be preserved and protected, regardless of the apparent determination of the Federal government to harrass them and investigate any charge even remotely connected with the subject of so-called "civil rights."

Recently, I protested to the FBI the conduct of its FBI agents in conducting investigations in our state. In response, Mr. J. Edgar Hoover assured me that his agents were "extremely scrupulous in protecting the property and rights of those citizens with whom we come in contact."

I am certain that Mr. Hoover will investigate any specific complaint against his agency, and I will insist that he do so. In view of his response to the earlier complaint which I made to him, however, I do think it will be necessary for us to furnish him with statements or affidavits as to the specific incidents, dates and places, so that he can make a thorough investigation.

I am anxious to do everything I can to see that the rights of our citizens are protected, and I will go to the limit on this.

I look forward to hearing from you further with additional facts, and I will bring them to the attention of Mr. Hoover immediately.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

JS:ch

John Stennis, U.S.S.